

# The Strengths And The Weaknesses Of The Administrative Reform Efforts In Turkey

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## Abstract

The administrative reform that is determined with all attempts having the objective of attaining the administration to a scheme that could make contributions to accomplish the national targets, provide to meet the public services in a cost-saving, rapid, effective and qualified way, had a long history in Turkey. In that framework, while the administrative reform has a long history, public administration system in Turkey still confronted with the problem of not having a systematic and integrated administrative reform process. Within the context of the study, the administrative reform efforts have been examined at four periods; such as reform efforts before planned period, reform efforts at planned period, reform efforts at the 1980s, and administrative reform efforts at the last period. At that framework, the significant Report, Projects and Plans such as *MEHTAP (The Central Government Organization Research Project)*, *KAYA (Public Administration Research Project)*, Preliminary Report on Administrative Reform and Reorganization (1961), Administrative Reform Advisory Board Report, Five-year Development Plans have been critically searched to indicate the strengths and weaknesses of those reform initiatives. Finally, as a concluding remark, some proposals have been put forth to shed light on a systematic and proper application of the administrative reform process in Turkey.

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**Keywords:** Administrative Reform, Turkish Public Administration, Reform Efforts, KAYA, MEHTAP

## Introduction

The primary field of administrative reform that reached to a status as a conscious endeavor is related to the state or public administration. In that framework, it is also acknowledged that each social system's viability is connected with their compliance to the environmental alterations. Public organization systems which can be assessed as a sub-social system have to pursue the change and take the required precautions proper to them (Şaylan, 2012: 440). In that scope, the efforts towards reform-making and re-

organization have a long history in Turkey (Şaylan, 1973:15). The administration system's improvement had been a serious objective since Tanzimat (*Reform*) period, and the planned period at the Republican period was demonstrated as a turning point regarding the starting of the intensive efforts in related with re-organization. One of the major targets of the administrative reform can be determined as the effective, rapid and efficient functioning of public administration in accordance with the national objectives (Karaer, 1987a: 25-26). Within the context of the study, the administrative efforts have been examined in detail by the analysis of the related Reports, Projects and five-year development plans to put forth the strengths and the weaknesses at the administrative reform process.

### **The Concept of Administrative Reform and the Reasons that Lead to Administrative Reform**

There is an ambiguity at the determination of the concept of administrative reform, the synonym usages of the concepts of administrative reform, reorganization, re-structuring, the development of administration raised the confusions in many cases in Turkey (Altuntaş, 2007: 2). There is no clarity at the designation of the administrative reform at the prepared Reports towards the improvement of administration; most of them do not identify what the reform is (Karaer, 1991: 50). The terms used at the Republican period had a narrow context, and most of them were imported words such as rationalization, re-organization, modernization, and reform. In addition to that, recently, re-arrangement and re-structuring terms are used. While there has been accordance among all of these terms; it can be said that they represent a changing context and content according to the period they are used (Tutum, 2012: 471-472).

On the other hand, the reasons that entail reform at the administrative system vary according to the social structure. As in many countries, in Turkey, the changing conditions bring new responsibilities to the state in the administrative process. In that scope, the state has to take over new responsibilities that are emerged from the social and cultural developments and, on the other side, keep up with the technological advances. In particular, management, social security, health, environmental problems, and the new responsibilities emergence from the developments in the light of the scientific research are the primary reasons for the ongoing administrative reform efforts in Turkey (Karaer, 1987b: 30). In that framework, Sözen (2002: 198-201) also listed the imperatives of the administrative reform as follows; socio-economic imperatives (inflation rate, burden of public deficit, rapid urbanization, increase in unemployment rates), deficiencies in public administration (corruption, inadequate administrative capacity, bribery, red tape, lack of accountability, patronage and clientelistic relations),

globalization and the role of the international organizations (new public management reforms, advocating pro-market mechanism, focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, and economy, decentralizing management and privatization). Likewise, the idea of reform in public administration stemmed from the specific needs, and these requirements are also constituted the reasons for reform (Saran, 2004; 111).

### **Republican period administrative reform and restructuring efforts**

#### **Reform Efforts before Planned Period:**

Numerous studies and reports have been prepared in related with administrative reform in Turkey since the 1930s; one of the most significant of them can be counted as the Report entitled '*An Examination of Turkey in Economic Terms*'. That related Report submitted to the government by a group formed by American experts (Tatar, 2006: 21; Al, 2008: 21). However, until the 1945s, the administration system was not subject to any regulation; the improvements, and the development initiatives targeted the provision of a better structure and functioning of administrative system began at the last period of the II World War (IIWW) as in many countries in the world (Karaer, 1987a: 27). At that context, the first significant study in related with reform at public administration can be clarified as the '*Neumark Report*' in Turkey. The study that was conducted by Dr. F. Neumark in 1949, later the Report entitled as '*The Principles of Rational Work within the Central Government*' submitted to the prime ministry (Sürgit, 1972; Mihçioğlu, 2003: 91; Tutum, 1994: 84-85). That Report mainly dwelt upon the reasons of administrative reform necessity, and some proposals had been put forth for the formation of the necessary organizations for administrative reform, and the establishment of the rationalization committees (Karaer, 1987a: 28). However, the Report has criticized from the aspect that it's drawing attention not to the administrative reform integrally, but partially to the management of personnel (Sevinç, 2014: 733). Additionally, Barker Report financed jointly by World Bank (WB) and government, was prepared by a committee consisting of 13 members and published in 1951. The primary target of the Report declared as the provision of a search on the Turkish economy and presenting the proposals of the WB to the Turkish government on the long-term policies' (Güven, 1998: 107). The related Report put emphasis on re-organization of public personnel management, the distribution of tasks and authority, the delegation of authority to the provinces and local governments, the establishment of a central personnel department, and the development of in-service training programs, financial management, advisory and support services, accounting and training problems (Demirci, 2010: 155; Sürgit, 1972:69; İGB: 1994: 30; Kalağan, 2010: 68; Tutum, 1994: 84-85; Karaer, 1987a: 28; Kara, 2006: 154). At that

point, Aykaç (2003: 162-163) acknowledged that at the '*Barker Report*' instead of making a detailed research, some recommendations put forth where the committee evaluated those proposed fields as urgent and obligatory. Furthermore, James W. Martin and Frank A. Cush also prepared a Report titled '*Martin and Cush Report*' in related with the examination of the Ministry of Interior in the aspect of its organizational framework, working principles and personnel issues. That prepared Report later presented to the Ministry of Interior in 1951. As a result of the study, a central personnel department need is declared for the provision of fair treatment to the public officials, a fair wage system and recruitment process and the creation of a record systems towards the public officials are also other proposed issues (Şaylan, 2000: 110; Kalağan, 2010: 69; Sürgit, 1972: 70; Karaer, 1987a: 28).

In that framework, those reform attempts from the establishment of the Turkish Republic to the 1960s failed to reach the expected success; the main hinders can be clarified as follows; the entailed researches did not realize that could designate the fundamental tasks of the administrative reform and the liable institution to carry on those determined tasks, individual recommendations had an overwhelming influence on those reform attempts at that related period, the entailed public support was ignored at the attainment of the success from the administrative reform attempts, and the reports concerning administrative reform process had been prepared not by Turkish experts but by the foreign experts and institutions (Karaer, 1987a: 27; Uçar & Karakaya, 2014: 157; TODAIE, 1972: 19). On the other hand, those efforts can be assessed as a particular stage at the improvement of administration and while we look at these efforts' cumulative effects; these attempts are noteworthy in the development of administration before the planned period, and they have a significant impact on the subsequent period (Sürgit, 1972: 163; Sürgit, 1972: 46; 1980: 67).

### **Reform Efforts at Planned Period**

The initial period of the 1960s carried the feature of a search, preparation, and organization in terms of attaining a better formation and functioning of administration. At that related period, the meaning, purpose, and the scope of the re-organization or administrative reform were determined, and the basic researches were made persistent with administrative reform (Karaer, 1987a: 29). In that regard, by the 1960s onwards, three developments occurred which played a significant role in the administrative reform process. First of them is the establishment of the State Planning Organization (SPO); secondly, is the establishment of the State Personnel Department (SPD). Third of them is the becoming of the TODAIE as an important center for discussing, developing, and executing

administrative reform efforts (Sürgit, 1972: 79-80). The planned period was a significant term concerning the administrative reform process; those attempts launched to be carried out by the Turkish experts (Karaer, 1987a: 29). The basic attempts towards the administrative reform at the planned period can be clarified as 'Preliminary Report on Administrative Reform and Reorganization' (1961), 'MEHTAP', 'Administrative Reform Advisory Board Report' (1971).

### **Preliminary Report on Administrative Reform and Reorganization (1961)**

That Report was prepared on the demand of the SPO and National Unity Committee by TODAIE in 1961. The administrative reform has been searched from two aspects such as organization and working methods, and personnel problems (TODAIE, 1965: 8-13). That related Report has two fundamental objectives; one of them assisting to achieve a realist approach in the framework of the administrative reform; secondly, submitting an opinion concerning the fields of the administrative reform launched in Turkey and the mechanism to perform the administrative reform (TODAIE, 1965: 5). Likewise, the targets of the administrative reform identified as speed, quality, and economy. By the speed; it is aimed to provide services without delay on all sectors and levels. The quality is emphasized as the goal of the provision of the work or the service in a qualified way. The target of the economy is determined as sustaining the administrative activities without reducing efficiency and with the lowest cost (TODAIE, 1965: 11).

### **The Central Government Organization Research Project (MEHTAP)**

The Central Government Organization Research Project (MEHTAP) was prepared in 1964. At that framework, critical proposals come to the forefront in related with change at the administration formation for attaining an administrative structure in the attainment of the rapid economic development (Sürgit, 1972: 86-87; Keleş, 2006: 444). In this scope, the critical objectives emphasized as; to establish the environment in the realization of the aim of achieving a better organizational structure and working procedures, taking the related steps towards a systematic planning, effective financial control, provision of the proper distribution of the central government responsibilities, making more researches in related to the improvement of the internal organization of the ministries, and making proposals towards the liable institution concerning the administrative development (Sürgit, 1972: 86-87; Karaer, 1987a: 31; Sürgit, 1968: 7). MEHTAP Report was implemented for transforming the central government organization to a formation that allows the effective and efficient provision of public services (Leblebici, 2005: 7-8). That reference Report

recommended the establishment of a central unit responsible for the general design and coordination of the activities to provide the realization of the administrative reform, to determine re-organization and development of organization. However, a definite opinion concerning the organization of that unit cannot be put forward. However, instead of establishing the envisaged unit, SPO was appointed to this work with the 1964 year program. In addition to that, the establishment of an ‘Administration Development Committee’ was advised at all ministries and the other organizations. At the Report, it was pointed out that those committees under the guidance of the ministries and institutions that they member, conduct the activities of the development of administration (MEHTAP, 1966: 129). Afterward, ‘*Re-adjustment Commission of Administration and Administrative Methods*’, carried out complementary studies on MEHTAP Report (Karaer, 1987c: 64-65). The target of that commission is making additional studies, and realizing necessary measures on the issues of organization, administrative methods, and personnel matters (Mihçioğlu, 2012: 415). Consequently, MEHTAP Report criticized with the implementation level of the proposals that determined at the Report (Akın, 1998: 96).

### **Administrative Reform Advisory Board Report**

By Decree No. 7/2527 on 29/05/1971, in accordance with the government program, an ‘*Advisory Committee*’ established to designate the general direction of the re-organization of the state and the strategy, and this Committee launched to perform their tasks on June 18, 1971 (Sürgit, 1972: 149). In that context, the prepared Report consisted of two main parts with encompassing an introduction part. The introduction part focused on the meaning and nature of administrative reform and some theoretical issues, the status of the Turkish public administration in those days, and the reasons that entail administrative-reorganization, and those issues tackled together with the results of the administrative reform efforts up to that time. At the first part of the Report, the way and the organization at the administrative re-organization were examined, in the second part; the principles to be followed were analyzed at the administrative re-organization. Some of the recommendations at the first part can be listed as follows (Coşkun, 2005: 24; İdari Reform Danışma Kurulu Raporu, 1972: 29-34);

- The service of the development of administration should be adapted as an influential task of the central government.
- Each organization should consider the organization efforts as a part of their responsibility.
- The results of the existed studies should put into practice instead of making new research at the administrative reform studies.

- The institutions that are liable from the administrative reform should be strengthened.

- A central administration development unit should be established to determine the general policies and objectives, and that unit should be responsible for the implementation of the works in that direction. The responsibility field of that unit should encompass the provincial organization, local government, and state-owned enterprises. That related unit must be tied to the Prime Minister, and the responsibility should be taken over by a Minister of State on behalf of the Prime Minister. Consequently, that Report had vital differences from MEHTAP in related with the administrative efficiency and effectiveness; however, it did not pass beyond a revision of the MEHTAP Report because of its context. The Report was criticized regarding its only submission of formal recommendations and evaluation of the administration problems in a superficial way, and focusing on the revision of the functions and responsibilities of the ministries that are tied to the central government (Yaşamış, 2001: 24).

### **Reform Efforts after the 1980s**

By the 1980s onwards, significant re-organization efforts come to the forefront in the field of public administration. Firstly, a commission was set up for conducting an ‘*Operations Research*’ (*Yön Eylem Araştırması*) in related with the public personnel system’s problems; and as a result of that study the reasons of the public personnel problems listed as the employment policy implemented by the state, and the instability at personnel regime, and public administration. Furthermore, ‘Public Employment Policy’, ‘Personnel Regime’ and ‘Re-organization of Public Administration’ commissions were set up to solve those listed problems. In that scope, the report of the ‘*Re-organization of Public Administration*’ commission was vital because of that Commission dealt with the short-comings and the solutions towards the problems of public administration (Karaer, 1987b: 36-38).

Furthermore, the reform efforts before the 1980s, carried out as a technical activity to increase the state’s administrative power and capability within the framework of the public administration approach. However, after 1980s, the center of interest was the size of the public sector (downsizing state). The government that came to power after de-coup of 1980 tried to strengthen the local governments, marketization of the services with the down-sizing the public sector. These efforts did not bring drastic changes in terms of the strengthening of the local governments and reduction of the central government’s administrative tutelage on local governments (Aktel & Memişoğlu, 2005: 29). The understanding of the administrative reform of the 1980s focused on the assumption of the state that its responsibility field expanded excessively. It is alleged that the way to get rid of from the under-

development passes from the liquidation of the bureaucracy, the state's refraining from the economic, social, cultural life, and turning the attention to the international scale rather than national (Güler, 1996: 9).

### **KAYA Project (*Public Administration Research Project*)**

The KAYA Project had conducted from 1988 to 1991. The Project informed to the public in June 1991, by the Report entitled 'General Report of the Public Administration Research' (Aslaner, 2006: 60). At the Report, the existed problems of the local governments, the entailed changes, and recommendations towards them were also listed (Keleş, 2006: 464). The main objectives of the KAYA Project have been emphasized as follows; the provision of the public services in a qualified way by central and local government institutions, adopting of the public administration to the contemporary standards, designating the main failures at the public administration (its objectives, organizational framework, personnel and public relations system etc.) (Ergun & Polatoğlu, 1992: 21; TODAIE, 1991: 3). In that context, KAYA Report has lots of significant features. Firstly, it is tackling with the different fields of public administration together in a consistent way. Secondly, the essential ties tried to be set up among the local governments, and also between the local governments and central government. Thirdly, the efficiency, effectiveness, and democratization concepts had not been used as opposing concepts contradict each other at the KAYA Report (Geray, 1993: 10). Additionally, KAYA was a public reform period project because of the reasons that can be listed as follows; the reason of why there is a need for reform has not been questioned, the formation of the international system and the division of labor that living a drastic change since the beginning of the 1980s have not been questioned, the changing condition of Turkey at the new world order has not been analyzed, the changing functions of the state, the state's place in economic and social formation cannot be examined, the Project is focused on the traditional organization development methods in the creation of an administrative mechanism that can work rapidly, effectively, and efficiently such as the other projects of the period (Güler, 1996: 40). Finally, the proposed issues cannot be realized in a systematic and comprehensive way, but some of the proposals of that Project can be reached in time (Coşkun, 2003: 213).

### **Administrative Reform Efforts at the Last Period: Five Year Development Plans**

Within the framework of VI. FYDP (1990-1994) those issues were listed in related with the administrative reform such as; depending on scientific research, giving attention to the principles of effectiveness and efficiency, taking precautions to augment the efficiency, and paying attention



to the attempts in related with the augmenting performance, setting up a rational personnel policy and a wage system (DPT, 1990: 360). Furthermore, VII. FYDP (1996 - 2000) assembled the objectives concerning the re-structuring of public administration with the title of the '*Increasing Efficiency in Public Services Project and Ensuring Wage Justice in the Public Sector*'. In that framework, it was acknowledged that the public services should be re-assessed; and an approach should be set up in related with the provision of the compliance with the task and the organization, giving attention to the wage justice, reaching to the management approach based on participation and citizen-oriented' (DPT, 1996: 118). Lastly, it was also highlighted that an Ombudsman System will be established in Turkey tackling with the public complaints which is also existed at most of EU member countries for the effective and rapid solution of the conflicts came across at the relations between administration-citizens (DPT, 1996: 118-119). Furthermore, at the VIII. FYDP (2001-2005), the subject of re-structuring public administration is conferred at the 9<sup>th</sup> section entitled '*Improving the Efficiency at Public Services*'. That related plan draws attention to the necessity for integrated, radical, and permanent alteration at the functioning of the public administration. Briefly, the main targets for the improvement of the public administration and re-structuring were listed as follows (DPT, 2001: 191); the establishment of a public administration structure and functioning that oversees the change and development, and the development of the methods in the public administration that depending on qualified and rapid service provision. In that scope, at the IX. FYDP Report, it was highlighted that the major aspects of that period can be emphasized as having an efficient functioning of the market, organizational formation, an advanced technology and commercial infrastructure, and the closely pursuing of the market's changing and developing preferences. It was also pronounced that the countries that focusing on specialization at global markets, and the countries that can develop their production technology and innovation capacity take the possibility of transition to a structure that is increasingly knowledge-intensive and high-value contribution in the production of goods and services (Acar & Gül, 2007: 2). Finally, at the X. FYDP (2014-2018), it was highlighted that the usage of the communication services augmented throughout the period of the Turkey's transition to the information society (Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2014: 23). The rising of the application of the strategic management in public administration and the implementation of the accountability approach from the planning, monitoring to the evaluation at all stages of the administration circle are declared as the basic targets in the plan. At that context, the basic principles are counted as the provision of the participation, transparency, and citizen satisfaction with the increasing of speed and quality in public services; the

rising of the service quality and personnel efficiency at all processes from the recruitment to the retirement (Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2014: 51-52). As it is seen from the principles and suggestions of the five-year development plans; the main emphasis has been given on the development of the personnel system, augmentation of the public service efficiency, transparency, simplifying the bureaucratic procedures for citizens. At that framework, it is explicit that those principles and suggestions are encompassing a vital place at the improvement of the public administration. However, most of the principles and proposals had not been realized yet (Ar, 1983: 76).

## **Conclusion**

Turkey has a long history concerning administrative reform; lots of suggestions have been put forth on that process. However, it can be clearly declared that most of principles and proposals could not achieve the possibility of realization. The strengths of those proposals and suggestions lie at their composing of a background for the subsequent administrative-reform periods; these attempts also have influential impacts on the administrative reform process. However, there have also been lots of weaknesses at the administrative reform process such as; not implementing the researches to put forth the tasks of the administrative reform and not designating the liable institution to carry out those determined tasks; pursuance of attempts in the light of the individual recommendations and information; not providing active public support (Karaer, 1987: 27); problems about liable institution to collaborate and conduct other key institutions and organizations, not having sustainable policy and strategy at the administrative reform process. At that point, at the achievement of a good functioning reform process, the outputs of the existed and previous studies should put into practice rather than conduct a new research at the administrative reform studies; the institutions in related with the administrative reform process should be strengthened. The administrative reform process necessitates not a short-period for taking the expected results; so that the governments that came to the power should carry on the previous reform initiatives that put into practice before them. At that point, one of the most critical thing at the success of the administrative reform process is the designation of a liable organization in the management of the administrative reform initiatives; lots of institutions assignment in the reform process creates problems at the achievement of the expected results, and the responsible organization or organizations should reach the required possibilities at the achievement of the good results. Furthermore, the administrative reform process should be carried with a holistic approach and a strategy that integrating each interested groups and actors to the process such as NGOs, academic institutions, public, private, and professional

organizations. Besides, the active public support is the other vital criterion at the achievement of the success in the administrative reform efforts, for this reason, the entailed enlightenment process concerning the administrative reform process, strategy, way, target, phases, and methods should be realized to all related institutions. Finally, the objective of the administrative reform and its strategy should be constructed around a scientific effort; and the goals should be realistic, clear, applicable and appropriate with the socio-economic, political, and environmental structure of Turkey.

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